

MS. WINTERMUTE: Hi. I'm Janet Wintermute, editor at USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service in Riverdale, Maryland, just outside D.C. I have no Indian blood in this lifetime. However, in a prior lifetime I was a Kiowa. We don't have to talk about that now on the record, but I thought you might find it interesting. And I'm very glad I followed Katherine because she spoke about regulations, and that's what I want to talk about also. Congress passes the laws, as you all know, and it is the agencies of the federal government that write the regulations that make those laws take effect and operate. We have a sad deficiency in terms of consulting with Indians about the nature of our regulations. There is a remedy for this, however. There is already a rule in existence that stipulates that every federal agency making regulations is supposed to consult with the 562 federally recognized Indian tribes about the content of those regulations.

Now, in my own agency this is not happening in a systematic way, and I believe in several other USDA agencies it's not happening at all. What needs to take place, in my opinion, is for the Farm Bill language to be modified to include a requirement that every USDA agency have a full-time regulatory analyst and writer charged with consulting during the proposed rule making and final rule making phases of process with the federally recognized tribes. Obviously, reaching out on every regulation to all 562 tribes would be a huge undertaking. But if we don't ask Indians for their input on the impacts of these regulations before they are set in stone, we are just cutting all of you out of the process, and that is a travesty, and that has to stop. The Farm Bill can make that stop. Thank you.

MR. RACINE: Next. Come on, Coco, I know you're dying to say something.